

# Breaking Barriers in History

## National History Day 2019-20

*This introduction was adapted from the National History Day Indiana Student Guide for the North Carolina audience.*

The **National History Day office** chooses a different theme each year to unite all National History Day projects. While your topic must connect to the theme, the annual theme is broad enough for you to pick a topic from any time period or place. The annual theme is designed to help you go beyond the names and dates in your research to finding the impact and significance it has had on the past and may continue to have on the present and future.

During the 2019–2020 school year, the annual theme is **Breaking Barriers in History**. Countless events and people in history connect to this theme, which makes it seem quite broad. While this means you can connect it to many different topics, it is always good to start with a definition.

By defining “barriers” you can get a better grasp on what questions you should be asking as you connect your topic to the theme. After defining “barrier,” consider several ideas related to this definition.

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### Barrier (n)

1. something material that blocks or is intended to block passage
  2. a natural formation or structure that prevents or hinders movement or action
  3. something immaterial that impedes or separates
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### How have things in nature such as rivers, mountains, oceans or deserts acted as barriers?

Sometimes barriers are physical or natural structures that block movement. This theme lends itself to investigating how barriers have affected the movement of people for migration and exploration.

In addition to the barriers themselves, students can discuss the people who overcame these barriers, such as the first people to climb Mount Everest or reach the moon.

### How can something be a barrier if it's not a physical structure?

Barriers can also be social or political norms. Racial barriers such as segregation and voting legislation fit into this topic and can be looked at through multiple viewpoints. Think of people or groups in history who defied the odds despite society telling them they would never succeed. Attitudes can be barriers, too. For instance, how did attitudes about people with disabilities alter after the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act?

### Can barriers be positive?

Not all barriers are negative. For instance, many laws are created to protect rights or people. Vaccinations were created as a barrier against disease.

### What if the barrier was not broken?

Sometimes a barrier must have a crack put into it before it can be broken. It's ok for a topic not to completely break down a barrier – the important thing is to address the whole story in your project. Susan B. Anthony did not live long enough to see American women get the right to vote. However, her work helped to pave the way for it to happen.

## Why does a barrier exist?

This year's theme also allows you the opportunity to question why a barrier was put in place – whether it is legislation, social norm, or physical structures.

**Most importantly**, remember to ask why your topic matters today. As NHD says, “so what?” Did the breaking or building of a barrier have a lasting impact on society? Did it inspire future events that might not have otherwise been possible?

Ultimately, the answers to these questions must be found through **research**. Keep an **open mind** as you research and look for **examples of breaking barriers**.

While you can use any topic from any time period or place in history to relate to the theme, here are some **broad ideas** of places to look for topics:

### Physical

Consider inventions or breakthrough scientific discoveries that have impacted the world today. How did these break barriers? Was the barrier broken because of the discovery, the person who did it, or both? Or look at physical barriers that have been built by people and eventually demolished.

### Natural

Think of explorers who navigated oceans, rivers, and mountains. How were these accomplishments breaking barriers? What did they inspire? How is the world different because of these people and events?

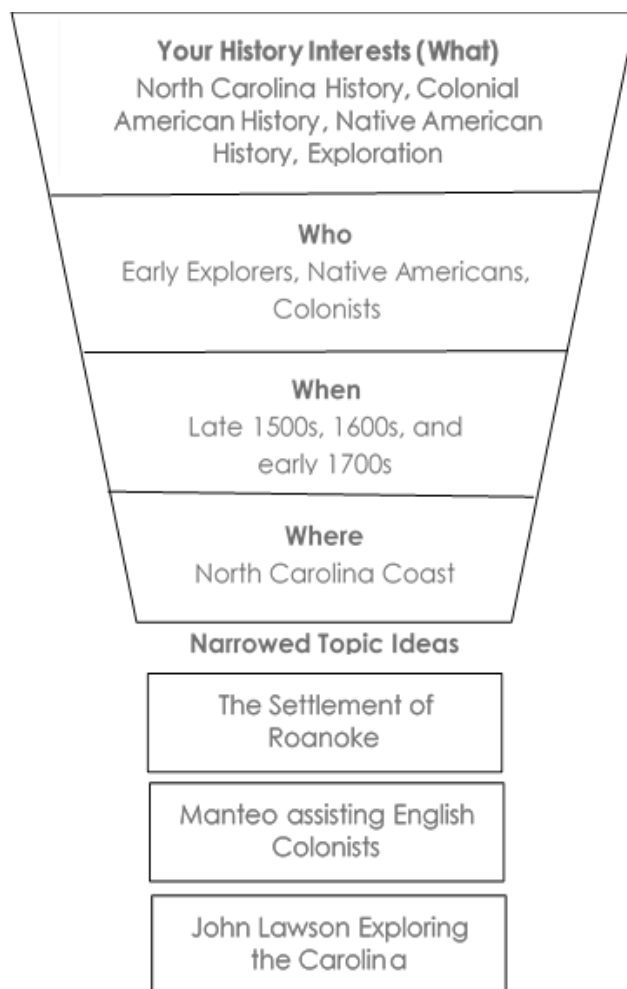
### Ideological

Consider topics that relate to social equality, such as people and events within the Civil Rights and Women's Rights Movements. Who are some key figures nation-wide, or even in your own community who have pushed limits set forth by society?

## Narrowing Down a Topic

As you choose your topic, remember not to be too broad. A topic such as, “The Civil Rights Movement: Breaking Down Racial Barriers,” might seem like a good choice at first, but it covers way too many events, people, and places. Broad topics like this one might make finding sources easy, but it will be that much harder to make a clear argument and stay within the word or time limits in your project category. Narrowing the topic down to something like, “Jackie Robinson: Breaking the Color Barrier in Baseball,” will help focus your research and the argument you would like to present.

Take a look at this example of how you can use Who, What, When, and Where questions to narrow down your broad history interests into narrowed down topic ideas.



# Breaking Barriers in N.C. History

## Topic Ideas in North Carolina History

These topic ideas explore possible connections to this year's theme within North Carolina history. Though sorted by type of history, many topic ideas fit into multiple sections so explore the list carefully. Some ideas will need to be narrowed down based on how you would like to approach the topic. A great place to start exploring many of these topics is on [www.NCpedia.org](http://www.NCpedia.org).

### African American History

Black Wallstreet  
Charlotte Hawkins Brown  
David Walker's Appeal  
Ella Baker  
Golden Frinks  
Hammocks Beach State Park  
Hannah Bond  
Harriot Jacobs  
John Carruthers Stanly  
Julius Chambers  
Lunsford Lane  
Maritime Underground Railroad  
Moses Grandy  
Ocean City Beach, N.C.  
Omar Said  
Royal Ice Cream Sit-in  
Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Ed.  
The Green Book in N.C.  
The Greensboro Four  
Thomas Day

### Art, Entertainment, & Fashion History

Ava Gardner  
Black Mountain College  
Doc Watson  
Earl Scruggs  
Molly McCoy Hancock  
Nina Simone  
Selma Burke  
The Artwork of John White  
Willie Otey Kay

### Environmental or Agricultural History

Biltmore Forrest School  
Carolista Fletcher Baum  
Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
Lucy Stowe  
Margaret Nygard  
Mount Mitchell State Park  
N.C. Fisheries Commission Board  
N.C. Zoological Park  
N.C.'s Natural Heritage Program  
N.C.'s Turpentine Industry  
The Mangum Terrace  
Washington Duke

### Fight for Civil Liberties or Freedom

(Also see the African American, Native American, & Women's History Sections)

1986 N.C. Lesbian & Gay Pride Parade, Durham  
A Pledge to Violate the Stamp Act  
Ella May Wiggins  
Halifax Resolves  
Jacob Henry  
Senator Sam J. Ervin Jr.  
Speaker Ban Law  
The First Provincial Congress

### Journalism or Photography History

Charles Kuralt  
George Masa  
Harry Lewis Golden  
Mary Bayard Morgan Wootten  
Photography of Hugh Mangum  
Sandra Hughes  
Willis Gustavus Borne

### Colonization or Defining Borders

Dividing the Carolinas  
Fort San Juan  
N.C. Barrier Islands  
N.C. Ceding its Western Lands  
The Carolina Charter  
The Lederer Expedition  
The Lost State of Franklin  
The Roanoke Colony  
The Walton War  
The Watauga Settlement  
War of Sugar Creek  
William Bryd II and *The History of the Dividing Line*

### Maritime History

Chicamacomico Life-Saving Station  
Civil War Blockade Runners in N.C.  
Graveyard of the Atlantic  
N.C. Lighthouses  
Pea Island Lifesavers  
Privateering/Piracy  
Lawrence E. Allen Sr.  
Submarine Warfare off N.C. Coast

## **Medical History**

1864 Yellow Fever Outbreak in N.C.  
1918 Spanish Flu Outbreak in N.C.  
Annie Lowrie Alexander  
Dr. Catherine Wilfert  
Dr. Susan Dimock  
Leonard Medical School  
The Union Field Hospital at the Battle of Bentonville

## **Military History**

Battle at Hatteras Inlet  
Battle of Asheville  
Battle of Averasboro  
Battle of Bettis's Bridge  
Battle of Charlotte  
Battle of Cowan's Ford  
Battle of Elizabethtown  
Battle of Guilford Courthouse  
Battle of Kings Mountain  
Battle of McIntyre's Farm  
Battle of Moores Creek Bridge  
Battle of Plymouth  
Battle of Wahab's Plantation  
Fort Anderson  
Fort Dobbs  
Fort Fisher  
Fort Macon  
Kiffin Yates Rockwell  
New Bern as a Union Occupied City  
"Old Hickory" Breaks the Hindenburg Line  
Spanish Invasions of Colonial N.C.  
Submarine Warfare off N.C. Coast  
The 1st North Carolina Colored Volunteers  
The House in the Horseshoe  
The Montford Point Marines  
Torrence's Tavern

## **Native American History**

1853 case State v. Noel Locklear  
Augusta Conference  
Cherokee Removal and the Trail of Tears  
Junaluska  
Manteo and Wanchese Travel to England  
N.C. Commission of Indian Affairs  
Qualla Boundary  
The Cherokee Code Talkers  
The Lowry War  
The Lumbee Pursuit of Education  
The Tuscarora War  
Thomas Oxendine  
Tryon's Line and the Proclamation of 1763

## **Overcoming Adversity**

Chang and Eng Bunker  
Lady Olga  
Millie-Christine McCoy  
Tiny Broadwick

## **Sports History**

Althea Gibson  
College Basketball & the N.C. Civil Rights Movement  
Dr. Frank Jobe  
Hang Gliding in N.C.  
Junior Johnson  
Michael Jordan  
Sugar Ray Leonard

## **Science, Technology, & Engineering**

Dr. Catherine Wilfert  
Gertrude B. Elion  
Linn Cove Viaduct  
Malcom McClean  
Richard Jordan Gatling  
Ronald McNair  
The North Carolina Railroad  
The Wilmington & Weldon Railroad  
The Wright Brothers  
William E. Thornton (Astronaut)

## **Women's History**

Anna Julia Cooper  
Annie Lowrie Alexander  
Beulah Louise Henry  
Connie Guion  
Cornelia Petty Jerman  
Dr. Catherine Wilfert  
Dr. Susan Dimock  
Edenton Tea Party  
Elizabeth Rumbough Baker Dotterer  
Fannie Parker  
Gertrude McKee  
Gertrude Weil  
Katherine Lee Harris "Kate" Adams  
Lillian Exum Clement  
Lucy Stowe  
Madelon Battle Hancock  
Margaret Wake Tryon  
Selma Burke  
Susie Marshall Sharp  
Susie Sharp  
The Struggle for Women's Suffrage in N.C.